

Business Standard

India ranks among the world's best in readiness for future in-demand jobs

According to the QS World Future Skills Index, India ranked 25th overall and excelled in the 'future of work' metric, achieving the second-highest global score of 99.1, just behind the US

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Representational Image

India has established itself as one of the most prepared nations globally for future in-demand skills, particularly in areas like artificial intelligence (AI), digital technologies, and green industries. This recognition comes from the inaugural QS World Future Skills Index, published by the UK-based higher education firm QS, which evaluates countries' readiness to meet evolving global job market demands. Ranked 25th overall, India is categorised as a 'future skills contender' in the index. It excels in the 'future of work' metric, achieving the second-highest global score of 99.1, just behind the United States, which tops the chart with a perfect 100, aided by Silicon Valley and curriculum-adaptive universities.

The QS World Future Skills Index classifies economies into four categories based on their performance: aspiring, practitioner, contender, and pioneer. India's position as a 'contender' reflects its progress in developing future-ready skills. The index evaluated countries using four key indicators:

- > Skills fit (alignment between education systems and industry requirements),
- > Academic readiness (capacity of education systems to deliver forward-looking skills),
- > Future of work (job market's ability to recruit for in-demand skills), and
- > Economic transformation (readiness for skills-driven economic growth).

Over 190 countries, 280 million job postings, 5,000 universities, five million employer skill requirements, and 17.5 million research papers were analysed to compile the rankings.

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India's strong performance stemmed from factors like its robust investment ecosystem fostering innovation, significant readiness to integrate AI into the workforce, and strong preparation to recruit talent for digital roles, alongside Mexico.

Challenges in academia and industry demand alignment

However, the report highlights key challenges, such as a misalignment between academic curricula and industry demands in AI, green, and digital skills, limited access to higher education for its growing youth population, insufficient focus on sustainability in education and industry, and low research and development spending (0.6 per cent of GDP compared to the global average of 2.7 per cent). India also ranks low on future-oriented innovation and sustainability metrics, indicating a lag in creating forward-thinking solutions and adopting sustainable practices. This highlights difficulties in aligning research and industry efforts with emerging global trends, including green technologies and environmental sustainability.

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Empowering youth through education reform

To address these challenges, the report recommends expanding access to tertiary education, especially in skills-intensive fields, to harness the potential of India's vast youth demographic. Modular education pathways could lower entry barriers and align graduates with industry needs. Reskilling and upskilling initiatives,

supported by policies like the [National Education Policy \(NEP\) 2020](#) and ULLAS (Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society), are also critical.

PM Modi says 'proud moment for India'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday lauded India's performance in the QS World Future Skills Index.

"This is heartening to see! Over the last decade, our Government has worked on strengthening our youth by equipping them with skills that enable them to become self-reliant and create wealth. We have also leveraged the power of technology to make India a hub for innovation and enterprise. The insights from the QS World Future Skills Index are valuable as we move further on this journey towards prosperity and youth empowerment," PM Modi said in a post on X.

Reports of skilled workforce gap

Meanwhile, a [National Skill Development Corporation \(NSDC\)](#) study had revealed a significant shortfall in skilled workers in September last year, with demand at 103 million compared to the current supply of 74 million. This disparity underscores an urgent need for targeted skilling and training across various sectors.

The shift in India's economic profile is a major contributing factor. Rapidly growing sectors like healthcare, semiconductor manufacturing, green jobs, sustainability, waste management, the circular economy, food processing, drone technology, and AI demand specialised skills currently in limited supply, the report said.

Additionally, the World Economic Forum reported in November last year that only a fraction of India's workforce is employable. Of the 13 million people entering the workforce annually, just 25 per cent of management professionals, 20 per cent of engineers, and 10 per cent of graduates meet employability standards. The International Labour Organization's (ILO) 2023 Global Skills Gap Measurement Report further revealed that 47 per cent of Indian workers, including 62 per cent of women, are underqualified for their jobs.

[With agency inputs]

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